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HOUSING

This is one in a series of papers in the general housing area.
Papers in this series include:

- "Preparing or Supervising a Housing Market Analysis" (EC-415)
- "Characteristics of Indiana's Mobile Home Residents" (EC-416)
- "Mobile Homes, Taxes, and Your Community" (EC-417)
- "Implications of Planning and Zoning as They Relate to Housing" (EC-418)

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CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIANA'S MOBILE HOME RESIDENTS

John R. Gordon, Agricultural Economics Department

This paper brings together some existing information to help ascertain several of the characteristics (age, family size, education, etc.) of Indiana's mobile home residents. It also reports recent trends and the outlook for mobile homes in Indiana. By necessity the information reflects the typical mobile home resident or the average mobile home. Hopefully, it will provide useful background information for interested persons to use when they need to estimate the implications of mobile homes on their specific community.

Recent Trends in Mobile Home Housing

In the housing literature the terms mobile, double wide, and expandable are used to describe the various units. Modular units and sectional homes are more recent concepts in factory built housing. The Mobile Home Manufacturers Association [9] defines a mobile home as a transportable structure, which exceeds either 8 body feet in width or 32 body feet in length, built on a chassis and designed to be used as a dwelling with or without a permanent foundation when con-

nected to the required utilities. Double wide and expandable mobile homes are variations of the basic unit.

Mobile home dwellers are often viewed as somehow being different from people in more conventional housing. To many people the mobile home dweller is a semi-permanent resident who uses more public services than he pays for in local tax dollars. The nomadic image was formed 20 to 40 years ago when the house trailer was associated with circus groups and migrant workers. In 1955 the 10-foot-wide mobile home came into mass production and began to appear in significant numbers as permanent residences in many communities. By 1970, 86 percent of the mobile homes constructed were either 12 or 14 feet wide. Obviously most of these are permanent homes.

Mobile home housing has grown rapidly as a percentage of all new housing in recent years. Table 1 shows for the United States the new housing mix of mobile homes, apartments, and conventional single houses in 1964 and 1969. During this five-year period, mobile homes increased from 11 to 23 percent of all new housing. The percentage of apartments increased from 32 to 38 and, consequently, conventional single family houses declined from 57 percent in 1964 to 38 percent in 1969.

Table 1. New Housing Mix in the United States, 1964 and 1969.

Housing type	1964	1969
Mobile homes	11%	23%
Apartments	32%	38%
Conventional single houses	57%	38%

Source: U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

The strong growth trend in the mobile home industry can also be observed in the production figures (Table 2). From 1950 to 1970 the number of mobile homes sold increased from 63,100 to 401,190, a 536 percent increase in 20 years. Recently it was reported that 1971 shipments to dealers to-

Table 2. Mobile Home Shipments in the United States.

Year	Manufacturers' shipments to dealers	Retail sales
1970	401,190	\$2,451,000,000
1965	216,470	1,212,000,000
1960	103,700	518,000,000
1955	111,900	462,000,000
1950	63,100	216,000,000

Source: Manufacturers Mobile Home Association

taled 507,650. From 1950 to 1970, sales increased from 216 to 2,451 million dollars.

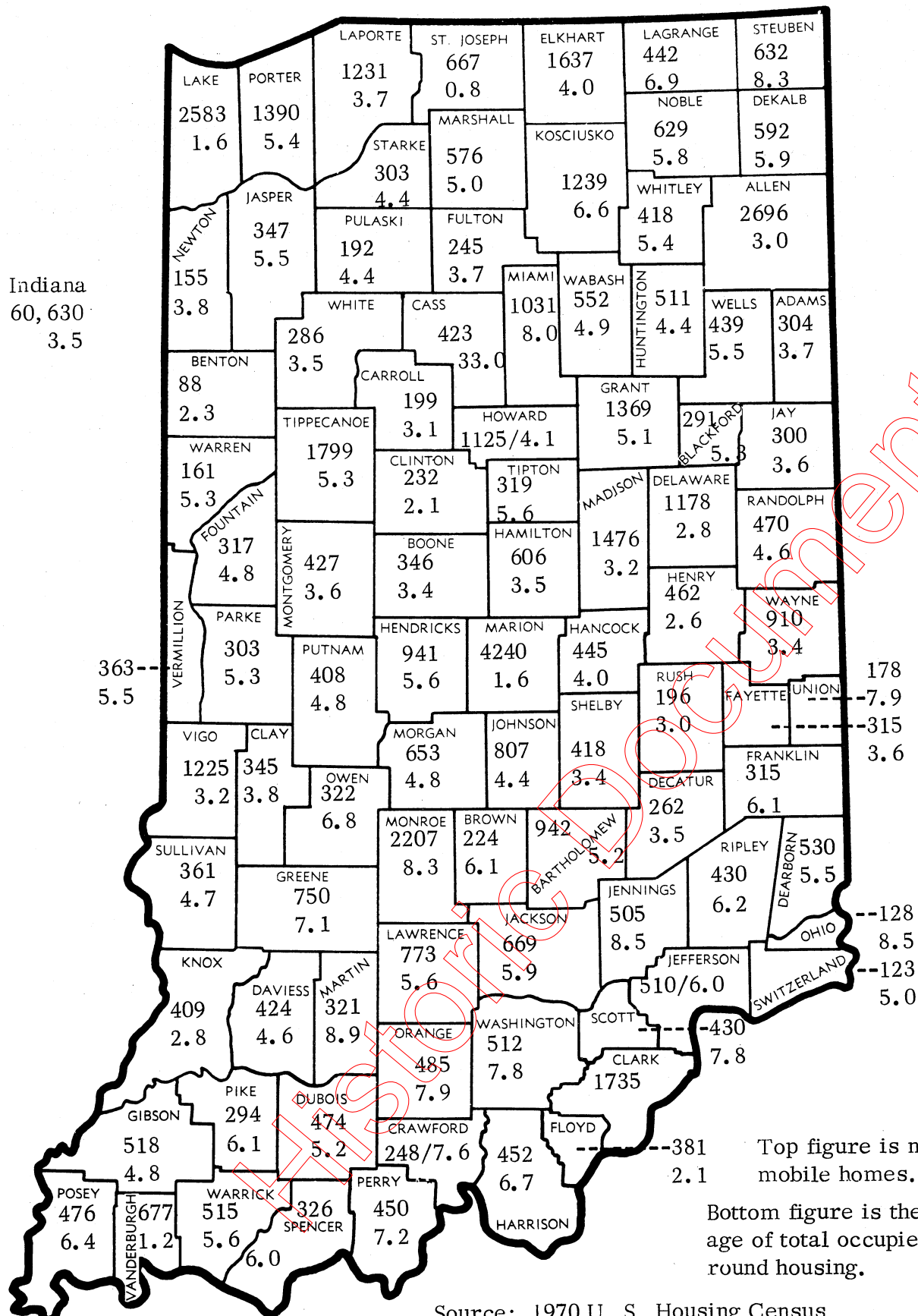
The U. S. Department of Commerce reported that, in 1970, mobile homes accounted for 95 percent of the new single family homes selling under \$15,000. A new mobile home fully equipped with major appliances, furniture, draperies, lamps, and carpeting retails from \$4,000 to \$18,000. The popular 12 x 60 feet size retails for about \$6,500 or about \$9.00 per square foot of living area, depending of course upon the optional equipment included such as air conditioning, garbage disposals, etc.

Figure 1 shows the total number of mobile homes by county as reflected in the 1970 census. Indiana had 60,630 mobile homes or trailers classified as year-round housing units. Almost 28 percent of these were located in just seven counties -- Marion, Allen, Lake, Monroe, Tippecanoe, Clark and Elkhart. However, mobile homes and trailers represented only 1.6 percent of the year-round housing units in Marion and Lake counties. St. Joseph and Vanderburgh counties contained the smallest percentages of mobile homes, 0.85 and 1.17 respectively. The largest percentage of mobile homes was 8.9 in Martin County.

Characteristics of Mobile Home Residents

Several studies to determine the socioeconomic characteristics of mobile home residents have been conducted in recent years. However, only a few of these included Indiana or parts of Indiana. Most of-

Figure 1. Number and Percentage of Occupied Year-Round Mobile Homes or Trailers in Indiana by County, 1970.



ten cited is the 1967 Mobile Home Survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Department of Housing and Urban Development [11]. The sample of 2900 households was drawn from mobile homes sold between October 1, 1964 and September 30, 1966, within forty states.

It should be emphasized that this was a survey of new mobile homes occupied by owners as their primary residences. Because the occupants had all recently purchased their homes, some of their characteristics may not be typical. For instance, it might be expected that families purchasing new mobile homes would have higher incomes than would all mobile home families.

Owens-Corning Fiberglas Corporation has recently published a survey of mobile home owners and mobile home dealers [10]. Interviews were limited to mobile home residents who had owned their present home two years or less and who were living in a top-rated mobile home park. The characteristics of these particular residents were similar to those reported in the HUD study.

A Rural Life Survey was taken in 1967 in the East North Central Region of the United States. The states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin were included. Information was obtained from a random sample of 4,676 open-country households. Within this rural sample, data were collected from 131 mobile homes. Recently the Economic Research Service (ERS) of the U. S. Department of Agriculture published a summary of the characteristics of these open-country mobile home residents [5]. This study included mobile homes of all ages but since it included only rural areas the findings can not be generalized to all mobile home residents in Indiana.

A survey of selected mobile home parks in Marion County was published in April 1970 by the Indianapolis Department of Metropolitan Development [4]. Mobile home park managers were surveyed to get information on the number of school-age children located in mobile home parks, density of units

per acre, and assessed valuations of park properties.

Except in those counties fortunate enough to have their own surveys, the HUD study is probably the best single source of information on characteristics of mobile home residents. Obviously, the characteristics of the typical mobile home family in Indiana cannot be precisely determined from any of these studies. However, some general characteristics of mobile home dwellers are suggested. When compared to households in general, mobile home households appear:

(1) to be younger. The household head is likely to be less than 30-35 years old. However, particularly in the retirement areas of the county, another large group of mobile home residents consists of people of retirement age.

(2) to be smaller and when children are present in the family they are likely to be younger. A large percentage of mobile home households contain no children. Many residents are young couples without children and others are past the child rearing age.

(3) more likely to be White.

(4) more likely to have a household head who has completed high school, but less likely to have completed any college.

(5) more likely to have a household head employed in a blue collar position.

(6) more likely to have a smaller than average income.

(7) more likely to own or be paying for their home.

Age. Statistical tabulations from the HUD and ERS studies which provide some basis for these generalities are summarized in Tables 3 through 7. Table 3 shows that mobile home household heads are much younger than household heads in general. The HUD study of mobile home purchasers shows the proportion of mobile home house-

Table 3. Distribution of Households in Mobile Homes and All Homes by Age of Household Head in the Open Country of the East North Central States and United States, 1967.

Age of household head	East North Central open country ^{a/}		United States	
	Mobile homes	All homes	HUD mobile home study ^{b/}	All households ^{c/}
	percent			
Under 25	16.8	3.5	22.9	6.1
25 to 34	32.1	15.5	26.5	17.5
35 to 44	9.9	21.1	15.3	20.3
45 to 54	13.0	19.9	14.1	20.1
55 to 64	6.9	17.5	11.8	16.7
65 and over	21.4	22.5	9.3	19.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

^{a/} Economic Research Service. Rural Life Survey. 1967.

^{b/} U. S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development. Housing Survey, Parts 1 and 2, Occupied New Housing Units, Mobile Homes and the Housing Supply. Washington, D. C. Nov. 1968.

^{c/} Current Population Reports, Population Characteristics Household and Family Characteristics, March 1967; Series P-20, No. 173, U.S. Dept. of Commerce, June 25, 1968.

hold heads under 25 years of age to be 22.9 percent. Nearly one-half of the mobile home household heads were less than 35 years of age. Less than one-fourth of the household heads in all homes were in this age category. Many of the other characteristics of mobile home residents, such as relatively lower incomes, are logically related to younger households.

The two studies differ in their findings of the percentage of older household heads in mobile homes. The ERS study in the East North Central states found the proportion of household heads 65 and over to be about the same as in all homes while the HUD study reported about one-half the number of older household heads in mobile homes that are in all households.

It seems likely that the HUD figures for new home purchasers are not representative of all mobile home dwellers for this characteristic. In retirement areas like Arizona and Florida the proportion of older residents in mobile homes is high. A 1965 study in

Arizona reported that 35 percent of that state's mobile home dwellers were retired.

Family Size. The HUD study found that an average mobile home family contained 2.49 persons versus 2.85 persons in all households. Two of every five families purchasing mobile homes had two members in the household (Table 4). About one-half of the mobile home residents in the HUD study had no children and when children were present in the household they were younger and fewer in number. The Indiana Mobile Home Association, in a cooperative study with the Federal Housing Administration, found the average number of school children for mobile homes in Indiana to be one child for 4.6 mobile homes. The ERS study found that a high proportion of older residents live in single person households.

Race. The typical mobile home resident is very likely to be White. Less than two percent of the mobile homes surveyed in the HUD study were occupied by Negroes. This

Table 4. Distribution of Households in Mobile Homes and All Homes by Number of Persons Per Household in the Open Country of the East North Central States and the United States, 1967.

Number of persons per household	East North Central open country ^{a/}		United States	
	Mobile homes	All homes	HUD mobile home study ^{b/}	All households ^{c/}
	percent			
One	19.8	9.5	10.7	15.5
Two	25.2	31.3	39.7	28.3
Three	22.9	15.8	23.9	17.6
Four and more	32.1	43.3	25.7	38.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

a/, b/, c/ See footnotes a/, b/ and c/ of Table 3.

Table 5. Education of Heads of All Families (1967 Current Population Survey) Compared to Education of Heads of Mobile Home Two-or-More Person Households.

Education of household head	1967 CPS All families	Mobile home 2-or-more person households
	percent	
Less than 8th grade	13.2	7.5
8th through 12th grade	64.4	74.5
1 or more years college	22.4	18.0
Median school years completed	12.1	11.6

Source: Table 7 of the HUD study.

is much lower than the percentage of Negroes in the general population.

Education. The HUD study reported that, in comparison with the heads of all households, the mobile home head of two or more person families had lower educational achievements. The median years of school completed for all family heads was 12.1 compared to 11.6 for mobile home heads. Analysis of the data suggests that the mobile home head is more likely to have completed high school, but less likely to have attended college (Table 5).

Occupation. The educational achievement and relatively young age of mobile home heads are consistent with their occupations

(Table 6). Over one-half of the mobile home heads surveyed in the HUD study were employed in blue collar and service worker occupations. They were less likely to be employed in professional or managerial positions.

Income. The HUD study found that the median income of mobile home residents in 1966 was lower than for all families, \$6620 versus \$7,440 (Table 7). In the United States the proportion of mobile home head incomes between \$5000 and \$10,000 is relatively large and the proportion over \$10,000 is comparatively small. In the Economic Research Service study of the open-country residents the percentage of low incomes in mobile homes was quite large. Forty-six percent of the mobile home residents in this study versus 37 percent of all homes reported incomes below \$5000.

Home Ownership. By definition of the sample, the mobile home residents in the HUD survey were owners of their homes. About one-fifth paid cash for their homes while the remaining 80 percent financed their purchases with loans. Most lots are rented. Only about one-fifth of the mobile home purchasers owned their lot. The ERS study found that over 95 percent of mobile home residents versus 80 percent for all homes owned their homes.

Table 6. Occupational Distribution, Heads of All Families (1967 Current Population Survey) Compared to Heads of Mobile Home Two-or-More Person Households.

Occupation	1967 CPS	Mobile home
	All families	2-or-more person households
	percent	
Professional, technical and kindred workers	10.9	7.1
Managers, officers and proprietors, including farm	15.0	8.1
Craftsmen, foremen and kindred workers	16.5	21.5
Operators and kindred occupations	15.7	21.4
Clerical, sales and kindred workers	10.5	7.2
Service workers	6.2	4.8
Laborers, except farm	3.7	7.5
Farm laborers	1.0	1.4
Not employed, or active military duty, or not in labor force	20.5	20.9

Source: Table 10 of the HUD study.

Table 7. Incomes of All Families (1967 Current Population Survey) and Incomes of Two-or-More Person Mobile Home Households.

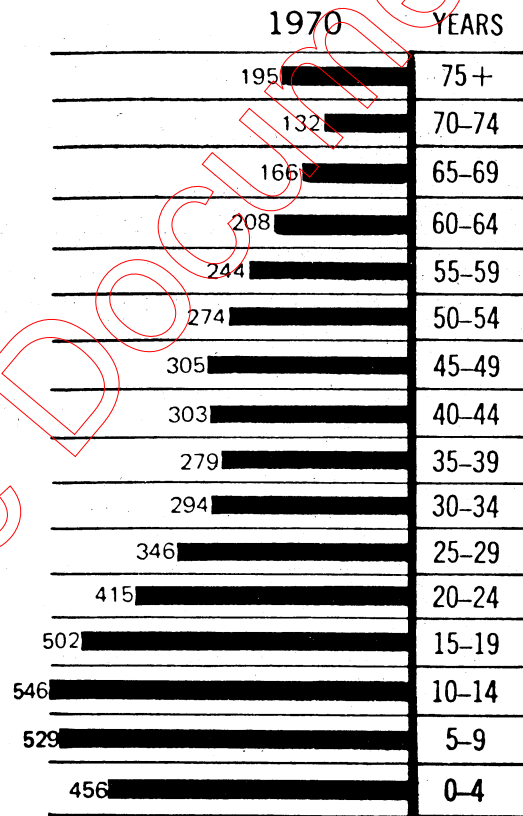
Family Income	1967 CPS	Mobile home
	All families	2-or-more person households
	percent	
Under \$ 2,000	7.7	3.3
\$ 2,000 to \$ 3,999	13.4	13.1
\$ 4,000 to \$ 4,999	7.1	11.2
\$ 5,000 to \$ 5,999	8.4	14.5
\$ 6,000 to \$ 6,999	9.4	12.7
\$ 7,000 to \$ 7,999	9.3	12.9
\$ 8,000 to \$ 9,999	15.1	16.5
\$10,000 to \$14,999	20.4	13.2
\$15,000 or more	9.2	2.5
Median dollars	\$7,440	\$6,620

Source: Table 12 of the HUD study.

Outlook for Mobile Homes

The biggest potential group of mobile home buyers is young marrieds. The bar diagram of Indiana's 1970 population shows that by 1980 the number of people in age groups 20-34 years is likely to grow substantially (Figure 2). (People in age groups 10-24 in 1970 will approximate the number of people in age groups 20-34 in 1980). Pursuing

Figure 2. Population by Age, 1970 (numbers in thousands)



Source: 1970 Population Census

chasing income of these people is likely to increase. Deferral of children in new households will very likely defer the trans-

fer from mobile to conventional housing. These factors suggest a continued strong demand for mobile homes.

However, on the negative side, it appears that competing forms of housing will reduce the demand for mobile homes based on population increases alone. Apartments appear to have been overbuilt in several communities and vacancies will keep rental rates down. Some analysts are predicting a sizeable over-supply of mobile homes and apartments within the very near future.

Over the next 5-10 years the mobile home may face its strongest competition

from modular homes. It is "highly probable that the factory built single homes with most of the appearances and characteristics of nonconventional single homes, will recapture a larger share of the total housing market." (Dr. Lawrence E. Krider. Notes for a Chart Room Briefing, Graduate School of Business, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, February 22, 1972.) However, the modular housing industry must find solutions to some rather serious problems of production and marketing before it can meet earlier expectations. In most areas, modulars have not significantly penetrated the mobile home market.

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